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SIPDIS

STATE ALSO PASS TO USAID
STATE FOR TSUNAMI TASK FORCE 1
USAID/W FOR A/AID ANDREW NATSIOS, JBRAUSE
DCHA/OFDA KISAACS, GGOTTLIEB, MMARX, RTHAYER,
BDEEMER
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA
TSUNAMI RESPONSE MANAGEMENT TEAM

SIPDIS
DCHA/FFP FOR LAUREN LANDIS
DCHA DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR WILLIAM
GARVELINK
ANE DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR MARK WARD
BANGKOK FOR OFDA SENIOR REGIONAL ADVISOR TOM
DOLAN
KATHMANDU FOR OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR WILLIAM
BERGER
GENEVA FOR USAID KYLOH
ROME PASS FODAG
NSC FOR MELINE
CDR USPACOM FOR J3/J4/POLAD
USEU PASS USEC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA - EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS:
USAID/DART SITREP #15

Summary

1. On February 4, the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) closed the Center for National Operations (CNO) and transferred its functions to the recently established Task Force for Relief (TAFOR). USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) assessments indicate that emergency needs for food, shelter, water, and clothing are being met, although with difficulty in some areas due primarily to lack of coordination and logistical constraints. According to the USAID/DART Logistics Officer (LO) in Galle District, the lack of governmental coordination and communication at the district and sub-districts levels remains the main concern in the southern districts, hindering the provision of humanitarian assistance. According to a donor fact finding mission to Jaffna District, the focus on provision of large amounts of assistance to tsunami-affected populations might present problems of disparity not only between conflict- and tsunami-affected internally displaced persons (IDPs), but also among the general population in the district. End summary.

Status of CNO

2. On February 4, the GOSL closed the CNO citing the end of emergency relief operations. The functions of the CNO have been transferred to the recently established TAFOR, headed by Commissioner General of Essential Services Tilak Ranaviraja, in partnership with the various government ministries. TAFOR will handle issues related to IDPs and their needs, including food assistance, temporary shelter, and payments, and will coordinate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and U.N. agencies. Another newly-formed entity, the Task Force to Rebuild the Nation (TAFREN), will handle issues pertaining to permanent housing and infrastructure rehabilitation.

3. With the closure of the CNO, no updated information on the numbers of displaced persons, IDP camps, and damaged houses is available.

GOSL Assistance

4. According to local media reports, on February 8, the Commissioner General of Essential Services refuted reports quoting him as stating on February 2 that only 30 percent of those affected by the tsunami had received

relief assistance from the GOSL. In a letter to Ministers and members of Parliament, the Commissioner indicated that his statements referred to food commodities that were dispatched to the districts, but had adequately reached only 30 percent of targeted beneficiaries. The Commissioner stated that 75 percent of beneficiaries had received GOSL assistance as of 1200 on February 7.

15. USAID/DART assessment teams deployed to all nine tsunami-affected districts in Sri Lanka have met with GOSL officials, implementing partners, and IDPs in camps. The USAID/DART reports that in general all affected people are receiving assistance from at least one humanitarian organization. USAID/DART assessments indicate that emergency needs for food, shelter, water, and clothing are being met, although with difficulty in some areas due primarily to lack of coordination and logistical constraints. There has been, however, no official information campaign by local authorities to inform people of their entitlements or the GOSL transitional shelter and reconstruction policy. Nonetheless, the robust response to this disaster by the international community suggests that no affected community will be excluded from support.

Situation in Galle District

16. The USAID/DART LO posted to Galle departed for Colombo on February 8. According to the USAID/DART LO, the lack of governmental coordination and communication at the district and sub-districts levels remains the main concern in the southern districts of Galle, Hambantota, and Matara, hindering the provision of humanitarian assistance. In addition, lack of a clear GOSL policy regarding resettlement in coastal areas, or buffer zones, are hampering relief agencies' ability to provide shelter. Some officials insist that no one can return to within 100 meters of the coast, while others only insist that no permanent structures be erected within that zone.

17. According to the USAID/DART LO, water delivery in Galle is ongoing and meeting basic needs, but inefficient. The Indian Military has completed repairs of the main water line running north from Galle town, but the Water Board has yet to run water through the system stating that there are still leaks. The Water Board has not begun to repair those leaks or to work with the Indian Military to repair them. The Water Board continues to request additional water trucks despite not having developed a water distribution plan that would highlight gaps and needs. The situation in Matara and Hambantota is reported to be similar, with basic needs being met but not in a systematic manner.

Donor Fact Finding Mission to Jaffna District

18. From February 2 to 4, representatives from the USAID/DART and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) conducted a fact finding mission to Jaffna District in northern Sri Lanka. The team reported that Jaffna was not hit as badly by the tsunami as other districts. Approximately 20 of

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the district's 400 Grama Sevaka (GS), or villages, were affected by the tsunami, with the impact most profound in the northeastern tip in Point Pedro. The tsunami also reached islands off the northwestern coast, mainly impacting livelihoods and infrastructure. Some of the hardest hit regions of Jaffna are in territory controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). According to the November 2004 U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Statistical Summary for Jaffna District, approximately 63,810 residents are displaced from their homes, with nearly 8,954 living in camps, due to the conflict between the GOSL and the LTTE.

19. According to the fact finding team, as a result of the conflict, inter-agency coordination mechanisms existed pre-tsunami and were well placed to respond. Prior to the tsunami, 23 NGOs worked in the district on

SIPDIS conflict-related issues; now there are approximately 30. UNHCR is the designated lead agency on information for the tsunami, and sectoral working groups are functioning and coordinating well; each sector has an NGO or U.N. agency as the lead coordinator. However, the fact finding team noted the need to strengthen coordination and decision-making in the livelihood restoration sector. In addition, closer coordination between the water and sanitation and shelter working groups is critical for appropriate decision-making both for transitional and long-term housing solutions.

110. The fact finding team reported that damage assessments and registration of affected populations by both the GOSL and LTTE started quickly after the tsunami, with records largely coinciding. U.N. agencies described this, combined with the unification of coordination, as a significant achievement in the response in Jaffna. However, the team noted a lack of coordination between the central and district governmental authorities. The district's Government Agent (GA) does not receive enough information on GOSL policy from central levels or from the various ministries. This is particularly important in the area of shelter strategies.

111. In Jaffna, 6,084 houses were fully damaged and 1,114 were partially damaged. According to the fact finding team, the lack of clarity on whether the ban on construction within 100 or 200 meters of the coast will be enforced is hindering forward movement in the shelter sector. The issue is compounded by the lack of state land in Jaffna, due to the designation of large areas as quote high security zones end quote, and the fact that much land is privately owned. The GA noted that acquisition of private land was notoriously difficult. The fact finding team reported that there is no discussion as yet of permanent housing options. UNHCR stated that it will not be involved in permanent shelter activities. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRC) noted that there was a difference in policy on a permanent housing plan between the GOSL and the LTTE and that negotiations would have to be held to come to a consensus.

112. The team observed that despite the lack of disquiet to date, the focus on provision of large amounts of assistance to tsunami-affected populations might present problems of disparity not only between conflict- and tsunami-affected IDPs, but also among the general population. The overall picture presented by Jaffna is that of an underdeveloped and conflict damaged region with little or no infrastructure, no investment, high unemployment, and dual government control. The team recommended a holistic approach to ensure equity among activities directed toward conflict- and tsunami-affected populations, and the general population.

113. According to the team, the GA described livelihoods as a top priority and noted that he will chair the sectoral working group dealing with issue. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), of the tsunami-affected population, 80 to 85 percent were dependent on fishing. The U.N. expects that those working in the fishery sector will be without income for at least two months.

114. In the water and sanitation sector, the team noted that sector coordination should be strengthened to ensure proper consideration of water and sanitation issues in shelter decision-making and to guarantee active involvement of the Water Board in relevant activities. Gaps in coordination between state actors and NGOs remain, and the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) stated that five different ministries are involved in water supply, compounding service delivery problems.

USAID/OFDA Programs in Jaffna District

15. Implementing partner IOM is primarily focusing on psychological and social assistance and livelihood restoration programs. IOM plans to include the tsunami-affected population in its ongoing livelihood and reintegration program for Sri Lankans returning from Europe to Jaffna begun in February 2003. For tsunami-affected beneficiaries, IOM will provide support for fishermen to purchase fishing nets and replace their boats and for widows to purchase sewing machines.

16. Action Contre la Faim (ACF)'s activities in Jaffna include the installation of approximately 100 semi-permanent latrines in IDP camps, well-cleaning, and the distribution of 1,000 sets of tools to clear debris. ACF plans to collaborate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNHCR, CARE, and Movimundo to create and distribute kitchen sets to resettled populations. ACF also plans to focus on livelihood rehabilitation through the distribution of small boats to fishermen and support for the repair of damaged boats.

17. The U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the sector leader for education and health in Jaffna. UNICEF has constructed temporary classrooms in damaged schools and has distributed 122 school-in-a-box kits, each kit serves 80 students and two teachers. In the water and sanitation sector, UNICEF has granted two 4,000-liter water trucks to the Water Board, has provided 53 1,000-liter water tanks for schools, cleaned and rehabilitated latrines in 38 schools, and distributed buckets and cups to all schools in the district. In the area of protection, UNICEF has continued its pre-tsunami work of monitoring the situation of unaccompanied children, with particular emphasis on the vulnerability of these children to recruitment by the LTTE. For psychological and social activities, UNICEF is working with the Jaffna Social Action Center (JSAC) on providing recreation kits. At JSAC's centers, children from conflict IDP, tsunami IDP, and host population families are brought together for recreational programs. UNICEF has also supported training and provision of supplies to local NGOs Ahavoli and World Holistic Center, as well as the Jaffna hospital-based Mental Health Society, to carry out group and individual therapy for affected people.

USAID/DART Staffing

18. As of February 11, there are five members of the USAID/DART in Sri Lanka.

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